

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Eastern Region



FS-1204

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DEERFIELD WIND PROJECT DECISION UPHELD

MILWAUKEE (April 9, 2012) – Eastern Regional Forester Chuck Myers, acting as appeal deciding officer, today upheld Forest Supervisor Colleen Madrid’s January 3, 2012 decision to select an alternative to approve the construction of a 15-turbine wind energy facility on the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, which will provide enough electricity to power about 13,000 homes annually.

Myers’ decision is in response to four of seven administrative appeals received during a 45-day appeal period that ended on February 24. Two appeals were withdrawn during informal disposition meetings between the Forest Service and individual appellants. One appeal was dismissed due to the appellant not submitting comments during two separate public comment periods, prior to filing an appeal.

Major concerns raised in the appeals included effects of the wind turbine facility on black bears, bats, and birds, as well as visual and noise concerns.

Regional Forester Myers’ decision to uphold Forest Supervisor Madrid’s decision includes specific direction to consider information in an updated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report on the effects of white-nose syndrome on bat mortality, issued on January 17, 2012.

Today’s announcement is based on a thorough review of the individual appeals relative to the Forest’s extensive environmental analysis and record of decision for the proposal to construct and operate a commercially viable, utility-scale wind energy facility on the national forest in the towns of Searsburg, and Readsboro. The proposed wind facility would be next to the Searsburg Wind Facility operated by Green Mountain Power Company on private land.

The facility will consist of 15 state-of-the-art 2.0 megawatt turbines that will stand 389 feet tall, from the ground to blade tip. The turbines are expected to produce approximately 92,506 MWh with a nameplate capacity of 30 megawatts.

The Green Mountain National Forest accepted the formal application from Deerfield Wind, LLC, owned by Iberdrola Renewables, in November 2004. For projects of this magnitude, the Forest Service is required to conduct a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, which includes in-depth analysis, scientific studies, and public participation. The environmental

impact statement and record of decision – which address various impacts and public concerns that have been raised -- can be viewed at: <http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/fs-usda-pop.php?project=7838>

The Forest Service began the NEPA process for the proposal in July 2005. A similarly required state review process conducted by the Vermont Public Service Board formally began in 2007. The board concluded its review in July 2009, with a decision to approve construction and operation of a 15-turbine configuration, subject to specific conditions.

Three other alternatives were considered through the federal NEPA process, in addition to the selected alternative. These alternatives included:

- The original proposal presented by the applicant, known as the Proposed Action, was to construct 17 state-of-the-art 2.0 megawatts turbines. Ten turbines would have been constructed on the west ridge and seven would have been constructed on the east ridge, adjacent to the existing Searsburg Wind Facility. The anticipated annual electricity generation for this alternative would have been approximately 99,776 MWh, with a total nameplate capacity of 34 megawatts, enough to meet the annual needs of 14,000 average homes.
- Another alternative, known as Alternative 3, would have built 7 turbines on the east ridge and no turbines on the west ridge. This alternative would produce approximately 41,084 MWh, with a nameplate capacity of 14 megawatts, enough to meet the annual needs of about 5,800 average homes.
- A “No Action” alternative, which is required by law and federal regulation.

The U.S. Forest Service intends to authorize the project by issuing a special use permit to Deerfield Wind, LLC to use up to 80 acres of National Forest System land. A special use permit will also be issued to Central Vermont Public Service to facilitate the distribution of the power generated by the project over the transmission lines that it currently owns.

The Green Mountain National Forest is required by regulation to wait 15 days after Regional Forester Myers’ decision is issued, before it issues a special use permit or otherwise allows implementation of the project.

Once constructed, this would be the first commercial-scale wind energy project on National Forest System lands.

The U.S. Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with a mission of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service’s Eastern Region includes twenty states in the Midwest and East, stretching from Maine, to Maryland, to Missouri, to Minnesota. There are 17 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie in the Eastern Region.

The Agency manages 193 million acres of public lands, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Recreational activities on national forest lands contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy.

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